GUNNER DEPEW

By

ALBERT N. DEPEW

Ex-Gunner and Chief Petty Officer, U. S. Navy
Member of the Foreign Legion of France
Captain Gun Turret, French Battleship Cassard
Winner of the Croix de Guerre

DEPEW IS WOUNDED IN FIERCE FIGHT WITH GERMANS AND GOES TO HOSPITAL.

Synopsis.—Albert N. Depew, author of the story, tells of his service in the United States navy, during which he attained the rank of chief petty officer, first-class gunner. The world war starts soon after he receives his honorable discharge from the navy, and he leaves for France with a determination to enlist. He joins the Foreign Legion and is assigned to the dreadnaught Cassard, where his markmanship wins him high honors. Later he is transferred to the land forces and sent to the Flanders front. He gets his first experience in a front line trench at Dixmude. He goes "over the top" and gets his first German in a bayonet fight. While on runner service, Depew is caught in a Zeppelin raid and has an exciting experience.

CHAPTER IX.

—7—

Laid Up for Repairs.

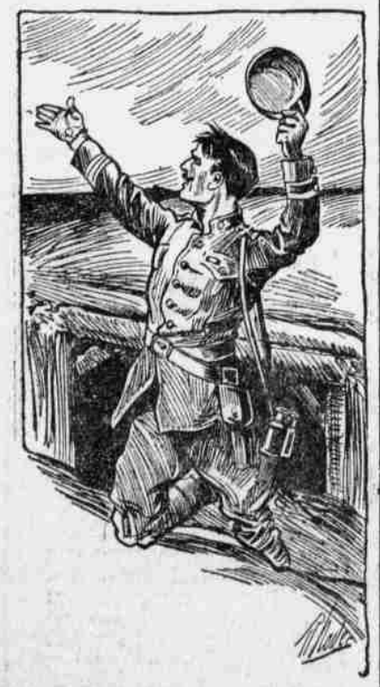
One night, after I had been at Dixmude for about three weeks, we made a charge in the face of a very heavy fire. Our captain always stood at the parapet when we were going over, and made the sign of the cross and shouted, "For God and France." Then we would go over. Our officers always led us, but I have never seen a German officer lead a charge. They always were behind their men, driving instead of leading. I do not believe they are as brave as they are said to be.

Well, we went over this time, and the machine guns were certainly going it strong. We were pretty sore about the chaplain and the Swiss and all that, and we put up an awful fight, but we could not make it and had to come back. Only one company reached the Boche trenches and not a man of it came back who had not been wounded on the way and did not reach the trench. They were just wiped out.

The captain was missing, too. We thought he was done for, but about two o'clock in the morning, he came back. He simply fell over into the trench, all in. He had been wounded four times, and had lain in a shell crater full of water for several hours. He would not go back for treatment then, and when daylight came, it was too late, because we were practically cut off by artillery fire behind the front line trenches.

When daylight came, the artillery fire opened up right on us, and the Germans had advanced their lines into some trenches formerly held by us and hardly forty-five yards away. We received bombs and shells right in our faces. A Tunisian in our company got crazy, and ran back over the parados. He ran a few yards, then stopped and looked back at us. I think he was coming to his senses, and would have started back to us. Then the spot where he had been was empty, and a second later his body from the chest down fell not three yards from the parados. I do not know where the top part went. That same shell cut a groove in the low hilltop before it exploded. He had been hit by a big shell, and absolutely cut in two. I have seen this happen to four men, but this was the only one in France.

About seven o'clock, we received reenforcements, and poured fresh troops over and retook the trench. No sooner had we entered it, however, than the Germans turned their artillery on us, not even waiting for their own troops to retire safely. They killed numbers of their own men in this way. But the



For God and France.

fire was so heavy that, when they counter-attacked, we had to retire again, and this time they kept after us and drove us beyond the trench we had originally occupied.

We left them there, with our artillery taking care of them, and our machine guns trying to enfilade them, and moved to the right. There was a bunch of trees there, about like a small woods, and as we passed the Germans concealed in it opened fire on us, and we retired to some reserve trenches. We were pretty much scattered by this time, and badly cut up. We reformed there, and were joined by other of our troops, in small groups—what was left of squads and platoons and singly. Our captain had got it a fifth time, meanwhile, but he would not leave us, as he was the ranking officer. He had a scalp wound, but the others were in his arms and shoulders. He could not move his hands at all.

But he led our charge when we ran for the woods. We carried some machine guns with us as we went, and the gunners would run a piece, set up, fire while we opened up for them, and run on again. Some troops came out of a trench still farther to the right and helped us, and we drove the Germans out of the woods and occupied it ourselves.

From there, we had the Germans in our old trench almost directly from the rear, and we simply cleaned them out. I think all the vows were kept that day, or else the men who made them died first.

I was shot through the thigh some time or other after the captain got back. It felt just like a needle-prick at first, and then for a while my leg was numb. A couple of hours after we took our trench back, I started out for the rear and hospital. The wound had been hurting for some time. They carried the captain out on a stretcher about the same time, but he died on the way from loss of blood. Fresh troops came up to relieve us, but our men refused to go, and though officially they were not there in the trench, they stayed until they took the captain away. Then, back to billets—not bullets, this time. I believe that we received an army citation for that piece of work, but I do not know, as I was in the hospital for a short time afterward. I do not remember much about going to the hospital except that the ambulance made an awful racket going over the stone-paved streets of Etaples, and that the bearer who picked up one end of my stretcher, had eyes like dead fish floating on water; also, that there were some civvies standing around the entrance as we were being carried in.

The first thing they do in the hospital is to take off your old dirty bandages and slide your stretcher under a big electric magnet. A doctor comes in and places his hand over your wound, and they let down the magnet over his hand and turn on the juice. If the shell fragment or bullet in you is more than seven centimeters deep, you cannot feel the pain. The first doctor reports to the chief how deep your wound is, and where it is situated, and then a nurse comes up to you, where you lie, with your clothes still on, and asks you to take the "pressure."

Then they lift you on a four-wheeled cart, and roll you to the operating theater. They take off your clothes there. I remember I liked to look at the nurses and surgeons; they looked so good in their clean white clothes.

Then they stick hollow needles into you, which hurt a good deal, and you take the pressure. After a while, they begin cutting away the bruised and maybe rotten flesh, removing the old cloth, pieces of dirt, and so forth, and scraping away the splinters of bone.

You think for sure you are going to bleed to death. The blood rushes through you like lightning, and if you get a sight of yourself, you can feel yourself turning pale. Then they hurry you to your bed, and cover you over with blankets and hot-water bottles. They raise your bed on chairs, so the blood will run up toward your head, and after a while, your eyes open and the doctor says, "Oui, oui, il vivra," meaning that you still had some time to spend before finally going west.

The treatment we got in the hospital was great. We received cigarettes, tobacco, matches, magazines, and clean clothes. The men do not talk about their wounds much, and everybody tries to be happy and show it. The food was fine, and there was lots of it.

I do not think there were any doctors in the world better than ours, and they were always trying to make things easy for us. They did not rip the dressings off your wounds like some of the butchers do in some of our dispensaries that I know of, but took them off carefully. Everything was very clean and sanitary, and some of the hospitals had sun parlors, which were well used, you can be sure.

Some of the men made toys and fancy articles, such as button hooks and paper knives. They made the handles from empty shell cases, or shrapnel, or pieces of Zeppelins, or anything else picked up along the front.

When they are getting well, the men learn harness making, mechanical drawing, telegraphy, gardening, poultry raising, typewriting, bookkeeping and the men teach the nurses how to make canes out of shell cases, and rings of aluminum, and slippers and gloves out of blankets.

The nurses certainly work hard. They always have more to do than they ought to, but they never complain, and are always cheerful and ready to play games when they have the time, or read to some poilu. And their work is pretty dirty too: I would not like to have to do it. They say there were lots of French society ladies working as nurses, but you never heard much about society, or any talk about Lord Helpus, or Count Whosis, or pink teas or anything like that from these nurses.

A few shells landed near our hospital, while I was there, but no patient was hit. They knocked a shrine of Our Lady to splinters, though, and bowled over a big crucifix. The kitchen was near by, and it was just the chef's luck that he had walked over to our ward to see a pal of his, when a shell landed plumb in the center of the kitchen, and all you could see all over the barracks was stew.

That was a regular eatless day for us, until they rigged up bogies and got some more dixies, and mixed up some cornmeal for us. The chef made up for it the next day, though. The chef was a great little guy. He was a "blesse" himself, and I guess his stomach sympathized with ours.

There was a Frenchman in the bed next to me who had the whole side of his face torn off. He told me he had been next to a bomber, who had just lit a fuse and did not think it was burning fast enough, so he blew on it. It burned fast enough after that, and there he was.

There was a Belgian in one of the other wards, whom I got to know pretty well, and he would often come over and visit me. He asked many questions about Dixmude, for he had had relatives there, though he had lost track of them. He often tried to describe the house they had lived in, so that I might tell him whether it was still standing or not, but I could not remember the place he spoke of. During our talks, he told me about many atrocities. Some of the things he told me I had heard before, and some of them I heard of afterward. Here are some things that he either saw or heard of from victims:

He said that when the Germans entered the town of St. Quentin, they started firing into the windows as they passed along. First, after they had occupied the town, they bayoneted every workingman they could find. Then they took about half of the children that they could find, and killed them with their musket butts. After this, they marched the remainder of the children and the women to the square, where they had lined up a row of male citizens against a wall. The women and children were told that if they moved, they would all be shot. Another file of men was brought up, and made to kneel in front of the other men against the wall.

The women and children began to beg for the lives of the men, and many of them were knocked in the head with gun butts before they stopped.

Then the Germans fired at the double rank of men. After three volleys, there were eighty-four dead and twenty wounded. Most of the wounded they then killed with axes, but somehow, three or four escaped by hiding under the bodies of others and playing dead, though the officers walked up and down firing their revolvers into the piles of bodies.

The next day the Germans went through the wine cellars, and shot all the inhabitants they found hiding there. A lot of people, who had taken refuge in a factory over night, decided to come out with a white flag. They were allowed to think that the white flag would be respected, but no sooner were they all out than they were seized and the women publicly violated in the square, after which the men were shot. A paralytic was shot as he sat in his arm-chair, and a boy of fourteen was taken by the legs and pulled apart.

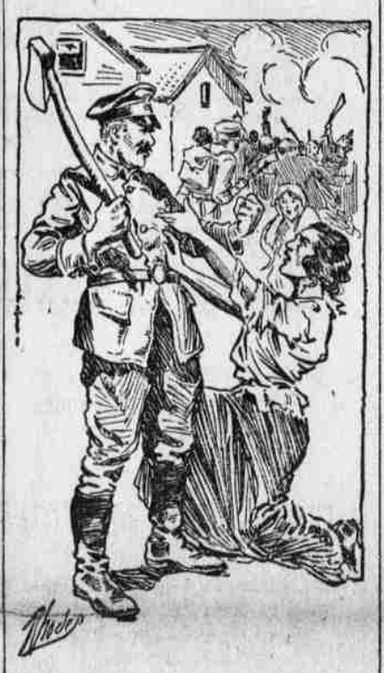
At one place, a man was tied by the arms to the ceiling of his room and set afire. His trunk was completely carbonized, but his head and arms were unburned. At the same place, the body of a fifteen-year-old boy was found, pierced by more than twenty bayonet thrusts. Other dead were found with their hands still in the air, leaning up against walls.

At another place the Germans shelled the town for a day, and then entered and sacked it. The women and children were turned loose, without being allowed to take anything with them, and forced to leave the town. Nearly five hundred men were deported to Germany. Three, who were almost exhausted by hunger, tried to escape. They were bayoneted and clubbed to death. Twelve men, who had taken refuge in a farm, were tied together and shot in a mass. Another group of six were tied together and shot, after the Germans had put out their eyes and tortured them with bayonets. Three others were brought before their wives and children and sabered.

The Belgian told me he was at Namur when the Germans began shelling it. The bombardment lasted the whole of August 21 and 22, 1914. They centered their fire on the prison, the hospital, and the railway station. They entered the town at four o'clock in the afternoon of August 23. During the first twenty-four hours, they behaved themselves, but on the 24th they began firing at anyone they pleased, and set fire to different houses on five of the principal squares.

Then they ordered every one to leave his house, and those who did not were shot. The others, about four hundred in all, were drawn up in front of the church, close to the river bank. The Belgian said he could never forget how they all looked.

"I can remember just how it was," he said. "There were eight men, whom I knew very well, standing in a row with several priests. Next came two good friends of mine named Balbau



Women and Children Begged for the Lives of the Men.

and Guillaume, with Balbau's seventeen-year-old son; then two men who had taken refuge in a barn and had been discovered and blinded; then two other men whom I had never seen before.

"It was awful to see the way the women were crying—'Shoot me too, shoot me with my husband.'

"The men were lined up on the edge of the hollow, which runs from the high road to the bottom of the village. One of them was leaning on the shoulders of an old priest, and he was crying, 'I am too young—I can't face death bravely.'

"I couldn't bear the sight any longer. I turned my back to the road and covered my eyes. I heard the volley and the bodies falling. Then some one cried, 'Look, they're all down.' But a few escaped."

This Belgian had escaped by hiding—he could not remember how many days—in an old cart filled with manure and rubbish. He had chewed old hides for food, had swam across the river, and hid in a mud bank for almost a week longer, and finally got to France.

He took it very hard when we talked about Dixmude, and I told him that the old church was just shot to pieces. He asked about a painting called the "Adoration of the Magi," and one of the other prisoners told us it had been saved and transported to Germany. If that is true, and they do not destroy it meanwhile, we will get it back, don't worry!

My wound was just a clean gunshot wound and not very serious, so, although it was not completely healed, they let me go after three weeks. But before I went, I saw something that no man of us will ever forget. Some of them took vows just like the men of the legion I have told about.

One of the patients was a German doctor, who had been picked up in No Man's Land, very seriously wounded. He was given the same treatment as any of us, that is, the very best, but finally, the doctors gave him up. They thought he would die slowly, and that it might take several weeks.

While in the hospital Depew witnesses a scene that convinces him that it is not only the kaiser and his system, but the German soldiers themselves, that are responsible for much of the frightfulness that has marked the war. Read about this scene in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Experiments with powdered peat for fuel have been so successful in Sweden that a plant for its production on a large scale has been established.

Temperance Notes

(Conducted by the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union.)

LINCOLN ON THE TEMPERANCE REVOLUTION.

An early speech of Abraham Lincoln's, says a magazine writer, "does not appear to have been quoted as often as some others. One wonders why." Speaking in Fourth of July vein, Lincoln said:

"Of our political revolution of 1776 we are all justly proud. It has given us a degree of political freedom, far exceeding that of any other of the nations of the earth. In it the world has found a solution of the long mooted problem as to the capability of the man to govern himself. In it was the germ which has vegetated, and still is to grow and expand into the universal liberty of mankind."

"Turn now," he proceeded, "to the temperance revolution, in it we shall find a stronger bondage broken, a viler slavery manumitted, a greater tyrant deposed. In it more of want supplied, more disease healed, more sorrow assuaged. By it no orphans starving, no widows weeping. By it none wounded in feeling, none injured in interest. Even the drammaker, and dramseller, will have glided into other occupations so gradually as never to have felt the shock of change, and will stand ready to join all others in the universal song of gladness."

NEVER AGAIN!

"Nothing could be more unjust to labor than to represent it as wanting the saloon or its vicious association," says the Anniston (Ala.) Star. "Had it not been for the labor vote the saloon could not have been wiped out of existence in this state. Were it not for the labor vote there would be no hope of keeping it out of the state. That is why the antis are going to profess such interest in labor and the labor vote. What part has labor with the liquor traffic? Why should they want to perpetuate the scurrilous business? Let the liquor crowd tell the laboring man why they want him to have the bad business on their hands! They dare not do so! They dare not insult the intelligence and the common sense of the laboring people by trying to say what the liquor business means for them.

"Once upon a time he may have thought he needed his drink; once upon a time he may have felt that he was suffering personal invasion of rights when the saloon by the vote of his fellow citizens was taken out of the community, but he does not feel so now. Never again, says the laboring man."

LABOR UNIONS AND PROHIBITION.

Dr. Wilbur Crafts of the International Reform Bureau says he has lived at the doors of congress for 23 years and has kept close tab on petitions. He finds none against prohibition from labor unions in dry states. "Only 447 in all," he tells us, "one-fiftieth of the 22,000 labor unions in the land, and all these from wet states that know nothing about prohibition except from hearsay. It is a case of unintended humor—as if 447 witnesses were called in court against a man's character—none of whom had ever seen him or known of him except by rumors that had reached them in other states. It is as if 447 persons had presented prize essays on dentistry that never pulled a tooth; as if 447 frogs in the marsh had united in a declaration that it was unhealthy to live high and dry."

SHOW THE LIQUOR SELLER.

A Pennsylvania saloonkeeper went South to visit his son, in Camp Greene. He was asked how he liked the place. "Like it?" he replied, "I thank God that my boy is down here training. The sight of 30,000 young men, enjoying themselves without drinking a drop, has made me a prohibitionist. I'm going home, close out my saloon and get into some other line."

Apropos of this incident, it has been suggested that successive batches of saloonkeepers be sent to the various cantonments to see the thousands of young men who are having the jolliest time of their lives without any aid from John Barleycorn.

NOTHING IN IT.

There is nothing in the talk that prohibition completely demoralizes a large city. There must necessarily be a period of adjustment, which is oftentimes a trifle trying, but no disaster befalls a community if agencies in behalf of it are properly at work. In short, there is nothing of a serious nature in this community growing out of the sudden transition from open saloons to a dry town.—R. H. Faxon, General Secretary Des Moines Chamber of Commerce.

THE PEOPLE DEMAND.

Railroad trains speed swiftly day and night in storm and wind and snow along their way. They thread mountain chasms; they cross deep cuts on airy, scarey trestles; they round dangerous curves. Only the brain of hair-trigger quickness, only the nerves of steel, can be trusted with trainloads of human lives. A single glass of whisky may mean the misreading of a signal and a holocaust of hundreds of human lives snuffed out. The public demanded sober railway men—and got them. It now demands a sober nation.

Her Experience.

Hubby—My dear, let me carve the fowl. I'm sure I can make it go farther.

Wifey—I know you could. I've seen you send it right off the table and I wouldn't attempt to make it go farther than that.

COULD ANYTHING BE SIMPLER

Yet Probably Many Who have Suddenly Dismounted From Mule Never Saw Things That Way.

A young soldier was watching the efforts of his fellow privates to ride a refractory mule. Not one of them could stay on its back for two seconds.

At last the looker-on approached and drawled:

"I say, let me show you how it's done."

"Come on, then," said the soldiers.

The youth sidled up to the mule, swung himself on the animal's back, wrapped his legs beneath its body and took a firm hold on the reins. The mule made a slight effort to dislodge him, but the man stuck. Another slightly more strenuous effort by the mule also failed. Then, laying his ears back, and taking a deep breath, the mule shot his heels into the air at an angle of 65 degrees, and the young man was propelled to the ground.

He slowly arose to his feet, screwed his fare into a smile, and said:

"Now, that's the way, boys! When you see he's goin' to pitch you off, just get off."

Pity for Benedict.

"All men who get married are not fools." "No; some are merely unfortunate."—London Tit-Bits.

A little affectation is permissible—but don't think culture is expressed by St. Vitus' dance of the eyebrows.